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THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

Year ending 31st December, 1925.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report of the Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics of the Ilminster Urban District for the year ending 31st December, 1925.

Circular 648 of the Ministry of Health states that this Report should be a Survey Report which should be more comprehensive than the ordinary Annual Report, but the Circular also states that the elaborate details necessary for the Report on a large town are not required for a small Urban District.

The Urban District of Ilminster consists of a small town and its environs, situated in the valley of the river Ile, and connected by rail with the main line of the Great Western Railway by a branch line from Taunton, 12 miles distant. A considerable part of the town is built on elevated ground (150 to 200 feet above sea level) but portions of it are low lying, making drainage difficult.

Geologically, the more elevated portions of the district are situated on the Middle Lias, the low lying portions on the Lower Lias. Alluvial gravel of the Pleistocene age is found in the immediate vicinity of the river Ile. A Fault runs East and West across the upper part of the town from Strawberry Bank to Knott Oak, bringing down the Midford Sands (a later formation).

Social Conditions.

A number of the inhabitants chiefly women and girls are employed in the Shirt and Collar Factories situated in the town.

Others are employed in the hemp spinning factory situated a mile South of the town.

For the past four years there has been unemployment in the district, especially amongst men, this has been due as it is in other parts, to the general industrial depression, and in this district also to the closure of a lace net factory situated just outside the district which formerly employed a number of hands.

A certain number of men are employed in the Wharf Lane Concrete Works, situated in the area.

Dairy Farming and Agriculture are carried on within the Urban District and there are two Milk and Cheese Factories within its limits.

None of the industries carried on in the district are injurious to health.

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Annual Report of M.O.H.

Please circulate as quickly as possible.

S.M.O. III.
(93 II).

S.M.O. II.
(96 II).

S.M.O. IV.
(91 II).

S.M.O. VI.
(39 II).

S.M.O. I.
(110 II).

General Library.

GENERAL STATISTICAL MEMORANDA.

Area - 519 Acres.
Population - 2281.
Number of inhabited Houses - 621.
Number of families or separate occupiers - 642.
Rateable Value - £8469
Sum represented by a penny rate - £35.

Vital Statistics.

Births.

Total number	...	28 (Males 6, Females 22)
Legitimate	...	27
Illegitimate	...	1 (Male)
Birth rate per 1,000 pop.		12.29

Deaths.

Total number from all causes - 24 (Males 14, Females 10)
Death rate per 1,000 pop. - 10·5
Deaths of Infants under one year - Nil.
Number of Women dying in or in consequence of child-birth - Nil.
Deaths from Measles and Whooping Cough - Nil.
Diarrhoea under 2 years of age - Nil.

The birth rate is practically the same as last year, but the death rate is lower.

The Amount of Poor Law Relief for 1925 was £317.5.1. Poor Law Medical relief has been chiefly in the cases of elderly indigent persons and large families of children belonging to working men with labourer's wages or out of work, (the number though not large has probably increased somewhat during the past few years owing to the shortage of work.

Hospital accommodation has been chiefly required for accidents or surgical cases requiring X-Ray examination or operations.

The chief cause of sickness during the year was Influenza and its sequelae. The disease manifested itself as usual in the first three months of the year, but the majority of the cases were mild in character.

There are no conditions of occupation which appear to have a prejudicial effect on the health of the Workers.

Notifiable Infectious Disease.

During the past five years there has been little notifiable infectious disease in the district.

The Medical Officer of Health keeps a supply of fresh Antitoxin Diphtheritic for issue on request to Medical Practitioners in the district.

Bacteriological and Pathological work is carried out for this district by the County Council Laboratory at Weston-super-Mare, where swabs, sputa, blood, etc., are sent from time to time for examination as requisite.

There is no Fever Hospital in the district. Isolation and nursing of infectious cases is carried out at home. The Medical Officer of Health calls on all houses where notifiable infectious disease is reported and gives instructions as to the precautions to be taken and the exclusion from School, etc., of contacts.

Disinfection is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector after cases of infectious disease with a hand spray, this is also performed after death or removal of infective cases of tuberculosis. In some cases by arrangement with the owner, internal redecoration is carried out. No methods of artificial immunisation for Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever have been carried out; there has been no diphtheria and only sporadic cases of Scarlet Fever in the district recently.

Table of Notifiable Infectious Diseases.

	1925.		
Disease.	Cases Notified.	Deaths.	Removed to Hospital.
Erysipilas	2	-	-
Scarlet Fever	2	-	-
Puerperal Fever	1	-	-
Lobar Pneumonia	1	-	-
Influenzal Pneumonia	1	1	-
Opthalmia Neonatorum	1	-	-
Measles	3	-	-

Measles is notifiable in the Urban District of Ilminster.

Three years ago there was a fairly widespread outbreak of this disease; there had been practically no cases for 10 or 12 years previously and there were thus a considerable number of children who had never suffered from the disease and consequently had no immunity. The cases were mostly without complications.

Opthalmia Neonatorum.

The Medical Officer of Health is authorised by the Urban District Council to provide a Nurse for treatment of such cases as may occur when he considers it expedient.

During 1925 one case only was notified, on this occasion one of the District Nurses devoted her time to treating the case and a cure was effected in three days, leaving no impairment of the eyes.

Table of Cases of Opthalmia Neonatorum.

Cases.						
Notified	Treated.		Result.			
	At Home.	Hospital.	Vision unimpaired.	Vision impaired.	Blind.	Dead.
1	1	Nil.	1	-	-	-

There were some cases of whooping cough among children during the latter part of 1925. The outbreak was not severe.

There was one case of puerperal fever during the year which recovered.

There were no cases of Polionyelitis notified during the year. During 1923 there were three cases in the district, efforts to trace any connection between them was fruitless, they all occurred in different families widely separated in different classes at School, all were girls between 6 and 12 years of age; prolonged treatment by massage and electricity was carried on in one case which was severe and resulted in great improvement, in muscular power.

There has been no epidemic of infantile diarrhoea during the past few years.

Tuberculosis.

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0								
1								
5								
10	1	1						
15								
20		2						
25								
35								
45								
55								
65 and upwards								
Totals	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-

The notification of tuberculosis is efficiently carried out in this district.

There has been no necessity to take action under Article 3 of the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis Regulations) 1925.

By the Public Health (Tuberculosis) Regulations 1924, which came into force in 1925, a quarterly return of all cases of Tuberculosis which have been added to, removed from, or remaining on the Register has to be made to the County Medical Officer, by Medical Officers of Districts.

Hospitals.

Tuberculosis.

There is no hospital for Tuberculosis in the district. Cases which require Sanatorium Treatment are dealt with by the County Tuberculosis Officers and admitted to one of the institutions in the County or otherwise.

There is no Fever or other hospital accommodation in the district.

As regards Smallpox cases, this district has joined the Somerset County Council Scheme for a joint Smallpox Hospital for the County.

General Hospital Accommodation is provided by the Taunton and Somerset Hospital, Taunton (12 miles distant), cases are conveyed there usually by private motor car; there is no ambulance in the area.

Maternity and Child Welfare.

This is dealt with by a County Scheme. By this arrangement patients are able to engage the services of a qualified Midwife to attend them; the Nurse being empowered to call in a doctor for Renatal Consultation at any time should she consider it necessary owing to the nature of the case.

The health visitors who work under the County Health Department visit houses where there are cases of children suffering from non-notifiable infectious disease and give advice to Mother as to treatment and management in those cases where no doctor is called in.

School Clinics.

Periodical examinations of children attending the elementary Schools are held under arrangements by the County School Medical Officer.

Tuberculosis Dispensaries.

There is a Dispensary at Chard, five miles distant under the County Tuberculosis Officer where patients attend from this district for examination and treatment.

Venereal Disease.

Treatment centres are situated at Taunton and Yeovil where patients may attend for treatment. There is, however, little Venereal disease in the district.

Professional Nursing in the Home.

General Nursing is carried out by the two District Nurses resident in the area, who work under the Ilminster District Nurses Association. They also attend cases in the immediately surrounding rural area.

Midwifery is carried on by the district Nurses who are qualified Midwives but for this part of their work they come under the authority of the County Medical Officer of Health. There are two qualified Midwives practising in the area.

Chemical examination of water, etc., when required is carried out at the County Health Laboratory at Weston-super-Mare.

Public Health Officers of the Local Authority consist of Medical Officer of Health, Part time, C.C. Court, M.B., D.P.H.

Mr. G. W. Warry, Engineer and Surveyor, who combines the Office of Sanitary Inspector with that of District Surveyor.

Legislation in Force.

List of adoptive Acts and Bye-Laws in force in the District.

Acts.	Operative from:
Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act 1889.	
Part 3 Public Health Act (Amendment) Act 1890.	
Infectious Diseases (Prevention) Act 1890.	
Public Health (Amendment) Act 1907 - Part 2, Part 3, Section 52 to 66 inclusive, Part 4, Part 5, Part 6 and Section 95 Part 10	1. 2.1911.
Public Health Act (Amendment) Act 1907 - Part 8	11. 8.1909.
Bye-Laws relating to:-	
Nuisances	15. 8.1902.
New Streets and Buildings ...	30.11.1923.
Slaughter-Houses. ...	29. 3.1923.
Common Lodging Houses. ...	15. 8.1902.
Pleasure Ground known as The Recreation Ground	2.11.1911.
Dairies, Cowsheds and Milk Shops ...	2. 1.1907.
Imposing on the Occupier of any Premises duties in connection with the Removal of House Refuse	15. 8.1902.
The Cleansing of Footways and Pavements, and the Cleansing of Earth Closets, Privies, Ashpits and Cesspools	15. 8.1902.
Tents, Vans, Sheds and similar Structures	12. 8.1909.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Water.

There are three water supplies to the town in addition to some local wells for houses in the lower part of the town on the West side.

Two of these supplies are private supplies, the Chink and New Road water which supply the higher part of the town, and the Court Barton water which is a public supply arising from a spring in Court Barton. This supplies the centre and south side of the town. There has been no shortage of water from these supplies. A good proportion of the houses have water laid on, but in parts of the town the water is obtained from stand pipes. The water from the New Road and Chink supplies arise from springs on the hills on the North and East side of the town respectively, and are pure and uncontaminated. The Court Barton supply, however, has for the past few years been bacteriologically unsatisfactory. During the past summer I carried out a series of tests with Fluorescin; a chemical which gives a green fluorescence to water even when present in most minute quantity, with a view to discovering the source of contamination. I tested all the known drains and sewers in the near neighbourhood of the spring and also those on the high ground above it, but was unable to detect it. The level of the water in the spring was lowered by lowering the overflow, so as to guard against the water coming in contact with the surface land, and the Chlorination plant which was installed some years ago to deal with this water and proved impracticable was

rehabilitated and restarted, but the heavy autumn rains interfered with its working in the latter part of the year. All consumers of this water have received instructions to boil it before use.

The scheme for a complete gravitation supply of water for the town is proceeding satisfactorily. Prospecting works will be completed shortly and it is anticipated that the main work will soon be commenced. The Engineer reports an ample supply from the source at Cudworth, situated about three miles South East of the town. Quantity estimated 110 thousand gallons per diem.

The bacteriological report on this water was satisfactory.

Rivers and Streams.

The only stream of any importance in the Urban District is the river Ile. Although the water of this stream is not used for household purposes, care is taken in this district that it is not polluted by crude sewage. The slopwater from the factories on its banks is effectively treated in septic tanks before discharge.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The town is drained by a system of sewers with the exception of the houses on the Station Road below the hill, these owing to lack of elevation are unable to be connected to it. The drains from these houses have very little fall and need careful attention to keep them in working order. The sewage from them is dealt with in two septic tanks which are kept in good order one by the Local Authority by arrangement and the owner privately, the other privately.

The main sewer of the town is carried out to Ashwell and there discharges; the sewage being dealt with by a system of broad irrigation, an area of over 27 acres is available for this purpose.

The Sewage farm is periodically inspected and works satisfactorily.

Closet Accommodation.

There are now but few houses which are not connected up with the sewer, with the exception of a few cottages which are on the edge of the district and beyond the limit of the sewer. Many of the closets are hand flushed.

Scavenging.

The principal streets are cleansed daily and watered regularly with a suitable water cart in dusty weather.

The house refuse is removed twice a week. This is done by contract and is at present satisfactorily performed. The present Contractor is now doing the work by motor lorry with a covered top with four hinged doors so that when the lorry is being loaded only one door is open at a time. This arrangement prevents a large amount of dust being raised during loading and is a great improvement on the open cart method formerly in use.

Sanitary Inspector's Report.

(a) Number of inspections re Drainage and complaints re nuisance ... 52
(b) Statutory Notices ... Nil.
Informal Notices ... 15.
(c) Result of service of Notices - Nuisances abated.

Schools.

The Sanitary condition of the Schools in the district is satisfactory, water is laid on to all schools.

As regards infectious disease, School Teachers notify the Medical Officer of Health on the form M.D.I. regarding any cases of suspicious infectious disease which come to notice. The M.O.H. then investigates the case and gives the Teacher written instructions regarding exclusion of the child and contacts from School.

Housing.

Number of new houses erected during the year.
(a) Total - 7.
(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts - Nil.

(1) Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects under P.H. or Housing Acts - 28.
(2) Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Regulations - 18.
(3) Number of houses found totally unfit - 1.
(4) Number of houses found not to be in all respects reasonably fit - 8.
Remedy of defects without service of formal notice - 9.
Action under Statutory Powers - Nil.

Housing conditions up to date have undergone little change. Six houses one with a shop front have been built in Silver Street during the past two years by private enterprise some of these have been sold and are occupied.

There is, however, a shortage of houses in the district and although serious cases of overcrowding are not common; there are cases where there are two families living in one house, usually a married son or daughter unable to obtain a separate house living with parents.

In 1925 the Local Authority decided to build houses, and have advertised for tenders for the construction of ten houses on the Listers Hill Site, six of the houses to be of the Parlour and four of the Non-Parlour type.

There has been no important changes in population recently nor is such change anticipated.

The type of housing in the area varies considerably, there are a good many modern type of cottages, but there are also a number of small old-fashioned houses still existing, these are usually strongly built and watertight but do not always fulfil modern requirements as regards lighting, height of ceiling, etc.

The remediable defects usually discovered are repairs to woodwork and plaster, whitewashing, etc. Owners have usually been found willing to do reasonable repairs when the need for these has been pointed out to them.

As stated elsewhere, a proportion of the houses have no water laid on, consequently water for the flushing of water closets in these cases must be carried by hand for this purpose.

A new water supply for the town is, however, in progress.

Milk Supply.

The milk consumed in the district is either produced within it or in the rural district just outside its boundaries. The milk is of good quality and sufficient for the demand.

The number of Milk Producers on the Register - 9.

Number of distributors - 6.

(1) Distributors who are also producers - 4.

(2) Distributors alone - 2.

The Register is complete.

There have been no applications for licences to sell graded or certified milk.

It has not been necessary to take action as regards tuberculosis milk or cattle.

The milk shops and dairy premises in the district have been periodically inspected.

A clean milk demonstration was held on the premises of a dairy farm in this district last year, under the arrangements of the Somerset County Agricultural Institute.

There are two Milk Depots in the district which collect milk from this district and also from the surrounding rural district. These have been inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

Meat. Inspection and supervision of Food.

The Slaughter houses, butchers shops, in the district have all been inspected with a special view to seeing that the 1924 Public Health Meat Regulations 1924 were being carried out, and the details of the Regulations explained where necessary, the requirements were readily complied with and considerable improvements have been made. In one case a new and up to date Slaughter House has been built in a suitable position and in another, the butcher has put in a new floor to his Slaughter House. Glass fronts have been fitted to those shop windows which did not have them previously.

Number of Slaughter Houses in the District.

	1920.	Jan., 1925.	Dec., 1925.
Registered	4	4	4
Licensed	Nil	Nil	1

Notices of time of slaughter are given to the Sanitary Inspector who is the person appointed to receive them.

There has been no meat condemned during 1925.

No complaints have been received of unsound food nor has such been discovered.

There are three bakehouses and one pastry cook shop in the district, these have been inspected and found in a satisfactory condition.